



Catholic Faith, Life & Creed

A Complete Catechesis for Christian Living

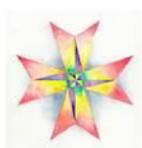
Doctrinal Catechesis Session Mary Birmingham

THE LITURGICAL YEAR



By Patnac

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Begin with the Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Opening prayer

Option 1: Use Opening Prayer from the Sunday Liturgy.

Option 2: Use the prayer provided below.

Prayer of Pope Clement XI

Lord, I believe in you: increase my faith.

I trust in you: strengthen my trust.

I love you: let me love you more and more.

I am sorry for my sins: deepen my sorrow.

I worship you as my first beginning.

I long for you as my last end.

I praise you as my constant helper.

And I call you as my loving protector.

I want to do what you ask of me:

In the way you ask, for as long as you ask, because you ask it.

Let me love you Lord as my God.

And see myself as I really am: a pilgrim in this world.

A Christian called to respect and love all those lives I touch.



Note to the Catechist

There may be more material than you can use in a one-hour session. Select and arrange accordingly. Use questions and material that is best suited for your particular group.



Read the connecting statement

to draw the line between this week's liturgy and this chosen doctrinal theme.

This connecting statement is found in the *Breaking Open the Word* worksheet for this week.

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Version 2.0 reflects all recent revisions in the Roman Missal.

NIHIL OBSTAT
Rev. Steven Olds
Censor Liborum

IMPRIMATUR
† Most Rev. John Noonan
Bishop of Orlando

June 27, 2011

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Sharing Human Experience

Catechist introduces this topic, using these or similar words:

The liturgical year looks at Jesus' life. We are presented with a panoramic view. All the stories of his life are remembered and come alive for us today. We bring the stories of the sacred Scriptures into our midst. We remember them. When we remember the stories, we make them as present to us as they were to those who experienced them firsthand.

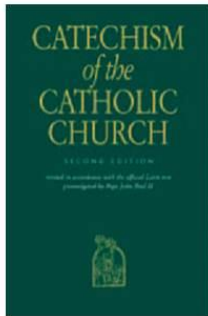
HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Catechist invites participants to take a panoramic view of their own lives—to remember significant events and call them forward. Allow five to seven minutes for the exercise and discuss for about five minutes.

- ▶ Consider your own life. Look back.
- ▶ Draw a line on a piece of paper.
- ▶ On the left of your line put the word, “childhood.”
- ▶ On the right of your line put the word, “now.”
- ▶ Start with childhood.
- ▶ Think of the most significant events of your life.
- ▶ Make notches along the line and list the key moments of your life.
- ▶ Even though you may not have been aware of it at the time, God was with you. Look at those events.
- ▶ Choose one or two events that you consider the most significant and in which you see the hand of God most clearly, and talk to the person next to you about those events.
 - What happened?
 - What did those events mean to you?
 - In what way was God present?
 - Was his presence a healing presence, reconciling presence, a consoling presence, a teaching presence?
 - Looking back with eyes of faith, what could you say about God's action in your life?

Wider Group Discussion:

- ▶ Is anyone willing to share an event in our wider group?
- ▶ What did the event mean to you?
- ▶ How would you describe the action of God?
- ▶ Was his a healing, teaching, reconciling, teaching presence?



Sharing Catholic Doctrine

Drawn from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Catechist continues:

- ▶ When we take the time to look at some of those events, it is almost like reliving them.
- ▶ Every time my family tells stories of special gathering with our family, it is almost like being there all over again.
- ▶ When we consider the liturgical year, it is almost like being there again. What we are doing is looking back on the life of Christ, and we enter into it.
- ▶ Before we can look to the liturgical year, we must look at the importance of Sunday.

Origins of Sunday

- ▶ Sunday is the weekly remembrance of Jesus death and resurrection. It was also called the Lord's Day by the early Christians. Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter concerning the Lord's Day, *Dies Domini* (#1), uses the psalmists words to remind us: "This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps. 118:24). Sunday is a "fundamental feast day," insists Pope John Paul II (#2).
- ▶ Sunday begins each week and it holds deep meaning for Christians. The days witness to the glory of God. Our Jewish ancestors used prayer to delineate the seven-day week. The entire day is a celebration of and is devoted to the memory of God's awesome mercy. In ancient times, it was believed that that the seven planets had something to do with the division of and marking of time. Some of the days of our week come from the words, Sun-day, Moon-Day and Saturn-day.
- ▶ The end of the week was the Sabbath. The Sabbath was understood as a witness to God's creation of the world, to God's deliverance of the slaves out of bondage and to God who rested on the seventh day.
- ▶ Christians met on the eighth day of the week, which is also the first day of the week.
- ▶ Sunday is called the eighth day, the first day of the week because it is a day unlike all the other days of the week.
- ▶ The eighth day is significant because Christians once again encountered the risen Christ when they met, eight days after his resurrection. Thus, the eighth day is an

encounter with the risen Christ.

Catechist invites participants to share with one other person (3-5 minutes), then share insights in the wider group.

- ▶ What does it mean to you that God “rested on the seventh day?”
- ▶ In what way do you follow the Third Commandment to make holy the Sabbath and keep holy the Lord’s Day?
- ▶ What could you do to make the Sabbath holy? The easy answer is going to Mass.
- ▶ What are some other ways?
- ▶ What does going to Mass have to do with your everyday life?

Meaning of Sunday

- ▶ When we gather on Sunday, we encounter the risen Christ in the liturgy.
- ▶ We bring into our midst the promises that were made to God’s people during the last days.
- ▶ God promised to send his Holy Spirit.
- ▶ God promised that his mercy would be given to everyone and that his kingdom would come into being.
- ▶ When Christians gather on Sunday, the eighth day, they gather on the “dawning” of the days that were promised by God.
- ▶ We are living in the dawning of God’s new kingdom, a time in which the lion will lay with the lamb and those who are sorrowful will be consoled.
- ▶ Sunday is the Lord’s Day because it is a day in which we gather to meet the risen Lord.

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- ▶ If every Sunday is a mini-Easter event, and if you are invited to participate in the sacrifice of Calvary, what is going on in your life right now that you would like to bring to the Lord’s Table (when you are able to come to the Lord’s Table)?

Names for Sunday

- ▶ The Sunday celebration has been known by different names throughout the Church’s history.
 - the eighth day
 - the Lord’s Day
 - day of the sun
 - day of light/sun
 - day of fire
 - day of faith
 - day of the Church
 - day of hope
 - indispensable day

Making the Sabbath Holy

- ▶ One way we follow the Lord's command to keep the Lord's Day holy is by remembering and giving praise and thanks to God for all the marvelous works of creation and most importantly the work of our redemption through the sending of his Son, Jesus.
- ▶ How do we engage in this remembering?
 - First, we gather as Christians around the Lord's banquet table.
 - Second, we tell the wonderful stories of God's wondrous accomplishments as proclaimed in the sacred Scriptures.
 - Third, we remember Christ's sacrifice for us. We give God thanks and praise. We take, bless, break, and share the body and blood of Christ.
 - Fourth, we are sent forth to become what we have eaten and shared for others out in the world.
- ▶ Our participation in Sunday Mass is very important. Every person's presence is needed since it is the gathering of the united body of Christ to sing and proclaim the glory of God, to feast at his table and to go out and make a difference in the world.
- ▶ The liturgical day runs from midnight to midnight, but the observance of Sunday and solemnities begins with the evening of the preceding day.
- ▶ While Sunday brings a specific story of the life, mission, death, and resurrection of Christ into our midst each week, the liturgical year tells the whole story over the course of an entire year.
- ▶ Not only do we tell the story, but we believe that in remembering the story, we are given access to the same grace. It becomes present for us.
- ▶ The Constitution on the sacred Liturgy reminds us: "Within the cycle of a year, moreover, the Church unfolds the whole mystery of Christ, from his incarnation and birth until his ascension, the day of Pentecost, and the expectation of blessed hope and of the Lord's return" (CSL, 102).

Thus, the Church reminds us:

- ▶ "Christ's saving work is celebrated in sacred memory by the Church on fixed days throughout the year. Each week on the day called the Lord's Day the Church commemorates the Lord's resurrection. Once a year at Easter, the Church honors this resurrection and passion with the utmost solemnity. In fact, through the yearly cycle the Church unfolds the entire mystery of Christ and keeps the anniversaries of the saints" (General Norms for the Liturgical Year, #1).
- ▶ Thus, the liturgical year, also referred to sometimes as the Church year, also as the yearly cycle, consists of various liturgical seasons.
- ▶ Unlike our regular secular calendar that starts on January first, the liturgical year begins on the First Sunday of Advent, usually around December 1. During the seasons of the liturgical year, we celebrate specific events in the life of Christ.
- ▶ In addition to the seasons and Sunday, the Church has special celebrations called solemnities, feasts, and memorials.
- ▶ "As it celebrates the mystery of Christ in yearly cycle, the Church also venerates

with a particular love Mary, the Mother of God, and sets before the devotion of the faithful the memory of the martyrs and other saints” (GNLY, #9, 10).

According to their importance, celebrations are distinguished from each other and named as follows: solemnities, feasts, and memorials.

- ▶ A solemnity celebrates events, beliefs, and people of great significance in salvation history. Feasts are not as important, and memorials are less important than feasts.
- ▶ What you will remember most will be Sunday, the seasons, and most solemnities.



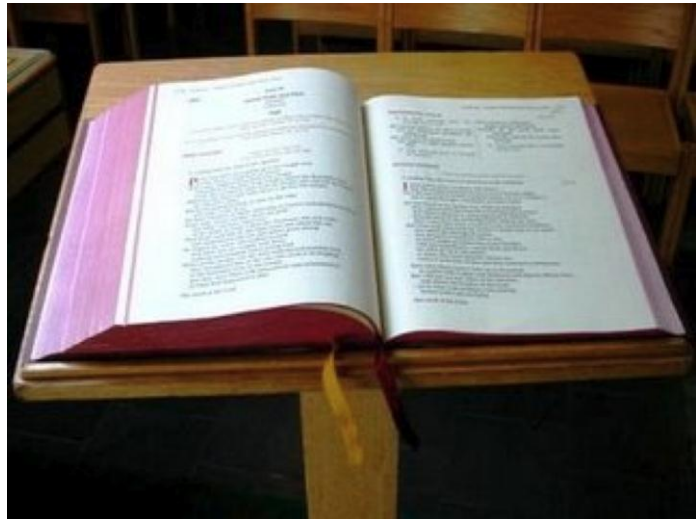
English: *The Lord's Prayer* (1886-1896) from the series *The Life of Christ*, Brooklyn Museum, by James Tissot. Public domain.

Lectionary

- ▶ In churches that follow the liturgical year, the Scripture passages for each Sunday (and even each day of the year) are gathered in a collection called the Lectionary.
- ▶ During various seasons of the year, certain portions of Scripture are read that highlight the theme of a given season.
- ▶ For example, during Advent, we prepare for the coming of Christ in our hearts at Christmas, the Christ who came in history, and the Christ who will come again in glory. The readings are chosen that best prepare us for that reality and that illustrate that preparation. We hear about John the Baptist who came to prepare the hearts of the faithful for the Messiah who was to come.
- ▶ Again, the book of readings we use at Mass is called a Lectionary. It contains all

the readings from the Old Testament and New Testament that we read over a three year period. We use a three year cycle: Year A; Year B; Year C.

- ▶ In Year A, we proclaim the story of Jesus as told from the perspective of St. Matthew.
- ▶ In year B, we proclaim the story of Jesus from the perspective of St. Mark.
- ▶ And in Year C, we tell the story from Luke's perspective.
- ▶ Each one has a special focus.
- ▶ While Matthew is listed first, most scholars believe that Mark was the first gospel written about 60 AD.
- ▶ Matthew was speaking primarily to Jewish converts to Christianity. Thus, he is very concerned with showing his community that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah.
- ▶ Mark is concerned with telling the story of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection. His community was having a difficult time. They believed Jesus was going to return soon. They were trying to deal with living the gospel and waiting for the second coming. Mark's Gospel takes us deeply into the heart of Jesus' ultimate sacrifice. It is the shortest of all the gospels.
- ▶ Luke was speaking primarily to Gentile peasants, a very poor community. He is not as concerned with Jewish issues as is Matthew. One of Luke's concerns is to show Jesus who always took time out to pray and who cared deeply for the poor and suffering.
- ▶ John does not have his own cycle. John is the evangelist who most eloquently highlights the divinity of Jesus. His gospel is scattered throughout all three cycles since it is the one that best expresses and exalts Jesus' divinity. John's Gospel is the last gospel written. It was written about 100 AD. The Christians had already been expelled from the synagogue. The Jews were given legal right to exist in Palestine; Christians were not. When the Jews expelled the Christians from the synagogue, they lost the protection of legal Judaism, thus making Christianity an illegal religion. Tension is high between the two communities. One can see that throughout John's Gospel.
- ▶ Each gospel reflects the community for whom it was written. It was and is a living word. It spoke to a living community then just as it speaks a living word to us today.



Liturgical Colors

- ▶ Each season is marked by the use of a special color that designates the season. We will highlight those colors as we describe each season.

Liturgical cycle

- ▶ The liturgical cycle divides the year into a series of seasons, each with its own mood and scriptural and theological focus.
- ▶ The Church year is divided into seasons. One can think of a large pie cut into certain size wedges.

Advent

- The Church year begins with the season of Advent. The word *Advent* comes from the Latin, *adventus* which means coming. We consider the season of Advent in tandem with the season of Christmas. Sometimes it is referred to as the Advent-Christmas season.
- Advent prepares for Christmas so it does not stand alone. Advent prepares for the coming of Christ who came once in history, who comes each day in our hearts, who comes to us at Christmas, and who will come again in glory at the end of the world. Its mood is one of waiting and anticipation.
- There are four weeks in this season. It usually begins around the first of December. The liturgical color of Advent is violet.



Christmas

- ▶ Christmas season begins on Christmas Eve with the vigil liturgies of Christmas. It ends on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the Sunday after Epiphany.
- ▶ The Christmas season highlights all the themes of manifestation and Christ taking on human form—the Incarnation.
- ▶ Christmas celebrates Christ, the Light who came into the world. A primary symbol of the Christmas season is light.
- ▶ Thus, during the Christmas season we celebrate not only the birth of Jesus, but also the Feast of Mary, Mother of God and the feast of the holy Family, and the Feast of the coming of the Magi on Epiphany. The season closes with the baptism of Jesus—the beginning of his public ministry.
- ▶ The beginning of the year coincides with the beginning of Jesus' ministry.
- ▶ The liturgical color of Christmas is white or gold.

Ordinary Time

- ▶ Ordinary Time comes from the Latin meaning *ordinal*, counted Sundays.
- ▶ Ordinary time is simply the period marked by counting the Sundays of the year that do not fall in the two great liturgical cycles of Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter.
- ▶ No Sunday is really ordinary, because every Sunday celebrates and makes present to us the resurrection of the Lord.
- ▶ While seasons such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter celebrate specific themes and events in Jesus' life, ordinary time tells the "rest of the story." It proclaims the bulk of the Jesus' story.
- ▶ It takes 34 Sunday to proclaim the entire mission of Christ.

Winter Ordinary Time

- ▶ Thus, right after Christmas there are a few Sundays of Ordinary Time before we break in with the Lent-Easter season. Those early weeks are devoted to the beginning of Jesus mission and ministry.
- ▶ The liturgical color is green.

Lent/Easter

- ▶ Lent also must be understood in light of the Easter season. Lent is preparation for the Easter season.
- ▶ Lent is a time the Church takes time out to reflect on our lives. We take a serious look at the need for repentance.
- ▶ More than that, it is a time for us to be in solidarity with those who are preparing for baptism. The journey for those to be baptized becomes more intense.
- ▶ Special rituals are celebrated to heal and strengthen them as they prepare for baptism.
- ▶ The rest of us are to also prepare to renew our baptism at Easter. We all take time to seriously reflect on the areas of sin that need to be healed.
- ▶ There are six weeks of Lent.
- ▶ The liturgical color is violet.

Holy Week/Triduum

- ▶ Holy Week is to the year what Sunday is to the week.
- ▶ Holy Week begins on Passion Sunday (also called Palm Sunday). On Palm Sunday, we proclaim the passion and death of Jesus. We remember his entry into Jerusalem waving palm branches, and we dramatically proclaim the passion of our Lord. Each year, we hear it from the perspective of a different evangelist.
- ▶ We are blessed to have four different versions of the passion for our reflection and meditation.
- ▶ The liturgical color of Palm Sunday is red. Christ shed his blood. Red is the color of martyrs.

Triduum

- ▶ The Triduum (meaning “three days”) begins with the Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday.
- ▶ For three days, we celebrate the highest holy days of the Church year.
- ▶ Christians should never miss these celebrations.

Holy Thursday

- ▶ There is only one liturgy on Holy Thursday in which we commemorate Jesus’ washing the feet of his disciples, giving us the Lord’s Supper, and establishing the priesthood.
- ▶ The liturgical color is white or gold.

Good Friday

- ▶ We meditate on the symbol of the cross.
- ▶ Once again, we proclaim the passion of Christ, but we hear the evangelist John’s version of the story. We hear of the Christ who was in control, the divine Christ, the Christ who was in charge of the scene at hand, who willingly and knowingly embraced the cross.
- ▶ We are blessed to hear two perspectives each year, one that puts more stress on the human Christ and the other that puts more stress on the divine Christ. Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion proclaims the passion according to one of the synoptic gospels: Matthew, Mark, or Luke. Good Friday always proclaims the passion according to John. We hear from John who heralds the divine Christ.
- ▶ We are all invited to come forward and venerate the cross.
- ▶ The liturgical color of Good Friday is also red.

Easter Vigil

- ▶ The Easter Vigil is the mother of all vigils.
- ▶ We process in by the light of candles, just like the pillar of fire that saved the Israelites.
- ▶ It is the night we tell all the stories of salvation history. We make them our own.
- ▶ It is the night that the Church gives birth. We bring new Christians to birth, to new life through baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist. Eucharist, especially, incorporates us into full communion with the Catholic Church.
- ▶ It is the night that we are all renewed once again to go out and live as priest, prophet, and king, to lead people to Christ, to serve God’s people and to proclaim God’s word out in the world.

Easter

- ▶ Easter is the season par excellence that continues the celebration of the Paschal Mystery, with a focus on the resurrection, ascension, and sending of Christ’s Spirit to the world.
- ▶ The date of Easter varies from year to year, according to a lunar-based dating system.
- ▶ It takes seven weeks to tell the whole story.

- ▶ Easter season ends on the feast of Pentecost, 50 days from the resurrection event.
- ▶ In those seven weeks, we hear the story of doubting Thomas who did not believe Christ was resurrected; we hear Jesus tell us that he is the Good Shepherd and that goes after his sheep; we hear the story of how Jesus ascended and returned to his Father and is now sitting with him at his Father's right hand; and we hear how Jesus told the apostles to go out and baptize all nations and how the Holy Spirit would be given to us to be with us now that Jesus is with his Father.
- ▶ It takes seven weeks to bring the story into our midst.
- ▶ The liturgical color of Easter is white or gold.

Summer and Fall Ordinary Time

- ▶ Summer and Fall Ordinary Time continues the rest of the story of Christ.
- ▶ As autumn leaves begin to fall from trees and the crisp cool air returns to remind us of frigid days to come, the liturgy begins to speak of last things, end times, and the end of Jesus' ministry.
- ▶ Various solemnities and feasts occur within the season.
- ▶ The last Sunday of the year, the 34th Sunday in Ordinary Time, is the feast of Christ the King.
- ▶ The liturgical color of Ordinary Time is green.



Community Connections

Catechist invites participants to reflect on the power of the Incarnation to transform their lives. Catechist witnesses to a story in his or her life or invites another parishioner to witness, then invites participants to witness to one another. See appendix #1 for an example.

- ▶ Consider the season we are presently celebrating.
- ▶ What are the primary themes?
- ▶ What is there about the themes of this season that speak to your Christian journey at this time in your life?

Liturgy, Scripture, and doctrine challenge us to transform our lives so that we can go out and help transform the world.

Catechist informs the group of any parish activity and makes arrangements of group participation.

What is taking place in the parish community this week/season that would challenge us to participate in the life of Christ as it has unfolds in the liturgical cycle, especially the stories in which Christ himself challenges us to care for the poor, oppressed, marginalized, the lonely, and disenfranchised? Our social concerns center provides, food, clothing and household needs to the poor in our area. They are looking for volunteers to help at the center. We will meet at the center this Tuesday evening at 6:00.



Mystagogy & your decision for change

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following challenge by sharing with one other person.

- ▶ Let us take a moment to thank God for the blessings of this year.
- ▶ Reflect on the ways you have grown as a disciple of the Lord throughout this liturgical cycle.
- ▶ Reflect on the ways God might be inviting you to grow even more.
- ▶ In what way does today's session challenge you to change?
- ▶ Is there a behavior or attitude in need of transformation?
- ▶ What are you willing to commit to do in response to what you learned about the liturgical year—what are the implications for your life?

Journal

Questions for your journal throughout the week: Continue to reflect on the ways you have grown as a disciple of the Lord and the ways God might be inviting you to grow even more.



Closing Prayer

Read Luke 1: 26-35

Option 1: If this is a catechumenal session, end the session with Intercessions, Doxology ("Glory be to the Father..."), a minor rite—a blessing or minor exorcism, RCIA # 90-97.

Option 2. Repeat the Prayer of St. Clement; include intercessions and Lord's Prayer.

APPENDIX

Appendix

Reflection on the liturgical year and the way in which it unfolds the life of Jesus over the course of the year easily invites reflection on my own life. The liturgical year leads me to reflect on the way in which the life of Christ has been a stalwart against forces that easily could have swamped our boat and sent us flogging about in the turbulent waters of life.

We have seen turbulent times, but we have seen incredibly meaning-filled, joy-filled times. Above all, we have experienced a journey in which no matter what we faced, it was always with the awareness that God was leading us. Every closed door meant that another door would open.

These days that celebrate the early days of Jesus' ministry remind me of the early days of a ministry that God would seed, water, and grow with his mighty hand. Our move to Florida from our strong roots in the Midwest, Iowa, and Nebraska, was a move ordained by God. God has accomplished marvelous things in our lives over these past 25 years. God's word to us that we should go, leave our homeland, that God would give us a home, proved to be borne out in so many ways.

We were given a parish community that became our family. We were given opportunities to serve God's people that we never would have had had we stayed where we were. I was given the space, time, opportunities, and education to develop the ministry to which God was calling and had been preparing me for a very long time. Our family grew stronger and stronger over the years. Like gold refined by fire, we were forged together in love. Each challenge bound us closer together. Our family grew, son-in-laws joined our company, and grandchildren blessed us in untold ways.

We blessed every event of our lives from birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, baptisms, birth of grandchildren, seasons of the year and seasons of our lives by sharing our most intimate family ritual that had bound us together for over forty years, the ritual of sharing the family blessing cup.

Above all, the glue that has bound us as a family is our participation in the life of Christ as it is proclaimed in liturgy and lived in parish life. It is a legacy we created for our children. Today they begin to forge the same path for their children. As we celebrate the life of Christ as it unfolds in the liturgical cycle, we become aware of the way in which that life impacts our own day after day. It is so very good to be a Catholic!

Liturgical Year handout

Origins of Sunday

- ▶ Sunday is the weekly remembrance of Jesus death and resurrection. It was also called the Lord's Day by the early Christians. Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter concerning the Lord's Day, *Dies Domini* (#1), uses the psalmists words to remind us: "This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps. 118:24). Sunday is a "fundamental feast day," insists Pope John Paul II (#2).
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- ▶ The end of the week was the Sabbath. The Sabbath was understood as a witness to God's creation of the world, to God's deliverance of the slaves out of bondage and to God who rested on the seventh day.
- ▶ Christians met on the eighth day of the week, which is also the first day of the week.
- ▶ Sunday is called the eighth day, the first day of the week because it is a day unlike all the other days of the week.
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Meaning of Sunday

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yearly cycle, consists of various liturgical seasons.

- ▶ Unlike our regular secular calendar that starts on January first, the liturgical year begins on the First Sunday of Advent, usually around December 1. During the seasons of the liturgical year, we celebrate specific events in the life of Christ.
- ▶ In addition to the seasons and Sunday, the Church has special celebrations called solemnities, feasts, and memorials.
- ▶ “As it celebrates the mystery of Christ in yearly cycle, the Church also venerates with a particular love Mary, the Mother of God, and sets before the devotion of the faithful the memory of the martyrs and other saints” (GNLY, #9, 10).
According to their importance, celebrations are distinguished from each other and named as follows: solemnities, feasts, and memorials.
- ▶ A solemnity celebrates events, beliefs, and people of great significance in salvation history. Feasts are not as important, and memorials are less important than feasts.
- ▶ What you will remember most will be Sunday, the seasons, and most solemnities.

Lectionary

- ▶ In churches that follow the liturgical year, the Scripture passages for each Sunday (and even each day of the year) are gathered in a collection called the Lectionary.
- ▶ During various seasons of the year, certain portions of Scripture are read that highlight the theme of a given season.
- ▶ For example, during Advent, we prepare for the coming of Christ in our hearts at Christmas, the Christ who came in history, and the Christ who will come again in glory. The readings are chosen that best prepare us for that reality and that illustrate that preparation. We hear about John the Baptist who came to prepare the hearts of the faithful for the Messiah who was to come.
- ▶ Again, the book of readings we use at Mass is called a Lectionary. It contains all the readings from the Old Testament and New Testament that we read over a three year period. We use a three year cycle: Year A; Year B; Year C.
- ▶ In Year A, we proclaim the story of Jesus as told from the perspective of St. Matthew.
- ▶ In year B, we proclaim the story of Jesus from the perspective of St. Mark.
- ▶ And in Year C, we tell the story from Luke’s perspective.
- ▶ Each one has a special focus.
- ▶ While Matthew is listed first, most scholars believe that Mark was the first gospel written about 60 AD.
- ▶ Matthew was speaking primarily to Jewish converts to Christianity. Thus, he is very concerned with showing his community that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah.
- ▶ Mark is concerned with telling the story of Jesus’ passion, death, and resurrection. His community was having a difficult time. They believed Jesus was going to return soon. They were trying to deal with living the gospel and waiting for the second coming. Mark’s Gospel takes us deeply into the heart of Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice. It is the shortest of all the gospels.
- ▶ Luke was speaking primarily to Gentile peasants, a very poor community. He is

not as concerned with Jewish issues as is Matthew. One of Luke's concerns is to show Jesus who always took time out to pray and who cared deeply for the poor and suffering.

- ▶ John does not have his own cycle. John is the evangelist who most eloquently highlights the divinity of Jesus. His gospel is scattered throughout all three cycles since it is the one that best expresses and exalts Jesus' divinity. John's Gospel is the last gospel written. It was written about 100 AD. The Christians had already been expelled from the synagogue. The Jews were given legal right to exist in Palestine; Christians were not. When the Jews expelled the Christians from the synagogue, they lost the protection of legal Judaism, thus making Christianity an illegal religion. Tension is high between the two communities. One can see that throughout John's Gospel.
- ▶ Each gospel reflects the community for whom it was written. It was and is a living word. It spoke to a living community then just as it speaks a living word to us today.

Liturgical Colors

- ▶ Each season is marked by the use of a special color that designates the season. We will highlight those colors as we describe each season.

Liturgical cycle

- ▶ The liturgical cycle divides the year into a series of seasons, each with its own mood and scriptural and theological focus.
- ▶ The Church year is divided into seasons. One can think of a large pie cut into certain size wedges.

Advent

- The Church year begins with the season of Advent. The word *Advent* comes from the Latin, *adventus* which means coming. We consider the season of Advent in tandem with the season of Christmas. Sometimes it is referred to as the Advent-Christmas season.
- Advent prepares for Christmas so it does not stand alone. Advent prepares for the coming of Christ who came once in history, who comes each day in our hearts, who comes to us at Christmas, and who will come again in glory at the end of the world. Its mood is one of waiting and anticipation.
- There are four weeks in this season. It usually begins around the first of December. The liturgical color of Advent is violet.

Christmas

- ▶ Christmas season begins on Christmas Eve with the vigil liturgies of Christmas. It ends on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the Sunday after Epiphany.
- ▶ The Christmas season highlights all the themes of manifestation and Christ taking on human form—the Incarnation.
- ▶ Christmas celebrates Christ, the Light who came into the world. A primary symbol

of the Christmas season is light.

- ▶ Thus, during the Christmas season we celebrate not only the birth of Jesus, but also the Feast of Mary, Mother of God and the feast of the holy Family, and the Feast of the coming of the Magi on Epiphany. The season closes with the baptism of Jesus—the beginning of his public ministry.
- ▶ The beginning of the year coincides with the beginning of Jesus' ministry.
- ▶ The liturgical color of Christmas is white or gold.

Ordinary Time

- ▶ Ordinary Time comes from the Latin meaning *ordinal*, counted Sundays.
- ▶ Ordinary time is simply the period marked by counting the Sundays of the year that do not fall in the two great liturgical cycles of Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter.
- ▶ No Sunday is really ordinary, because every Sunday celebrates and makes present to us the resurrection of the Lord.
- ▶ While seasons such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter celebrate specific themes and events in Jesus' life, ordinary time tells the "rest of the story." It proclaims the bulk of the Jesus' story.
- ▶ It takes 34 Sunday to proclaim the entire mission of Christ.

Winter Ordinary Time

- ▶ Thus, right after Christmas there are a few Sundays of Ordinary Time before we break in with the Lent-Easter season. Those early weeks are devoted to the beginning of Jesus mission and ministry.
- ▶ The liturgical color is green.

Lent/Easter

- ▶ Lent also must be understood in light of the Easter season. Lent is preparation for the Easter season.
- ▶ Lent is a time the Church takes time out to reflect on our lives. We take a serious look at the need for repentance.
- ▶ More than that, it is a time for us to be in solidarity with those who are preparing for baptism. The journey for those to be baptized becomes more intense.
- ▶ Special rituals are celebrated to heal and strengthen them as they prepare for baptism.
- ▶ The rest of us are to also prepare to renew our baptism at Easter. We all take time to seriously reflect on the areas of sin that need to be healed.
- ▶ There are six weeks of Lent.
- ▶ The liturgical color is violet.

Holy Week/Triduum

- ▶ Holy Week is to the year what Sunday is to the week.
- ▶ Holy Week begins on Passion Sunday (also called Palm Sunday). On Palm Sunday, we proclaim the passion and death of Jesus. We remember his entry into Jerusalem waving palm branches, and we dramatically proclaim the passion of our

Lord. Each year, we hear it from the perspective of a different evangelist.

- ▶ We are blessed to have four different versions of the passion for our reflection and meditation.
- ▶ The liturgical color of Palm Sunday is red. Christ shed his blood. Red is the color of martyrs.

Triduum

- ▶ The Triduum (meaning “three days”) begins with the Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday.
- ▶ For three days, we celebrate the highest holy days of the Church year.
- ▶ Christians should never miss these celebrations.

Holy Thursday

- ▶ There is only one liturgy on Holy Thursday in which we commemorate Jesus’ washing the feet of his disciples, giving us the Lord’s Supper, and establishing the priesthood.
- ▶ The liturgical color is white or gold.

Good Friday

- ▶ We meditate on the symbol of the cross.
- ▶ Once again, we proclaim the passion of Christ, but we hear the evangelist John’s version of the story. We hear of the Christ who was in control, the divine Christ, the Christ who was in charge of the scene at hand, who willingly and knowingly embraced the cross.
- ▶ We are blessed to hear two perspectives each year, one that puts more stress on the human Christ and the other that puts more stress on the divine Christ. Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion proclaims the passion according to one of the synoptic gospels: Matthew, Mark, or Luke. Good Friday always proclaims the passion according to John. We hear from John who heralds the divine Christ.
- ▶ We are all invited to come forward and venerate the cross.
- ▶ The liturgical color of Good Friday is also red.

Easter Vigil

- ▶ The Easter Vigil is the mother of all vigils.
- ▶ We process in by the light of candles, just like the pillar of fire that saved the Israelites.
- ▶ It is the night we tell all the stories of salvation history. We make them our own.
- ▶ It is the night that the Church gives birth. We bring new Christians to birth, to new life through baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist. Eucharist, especially, incorporates us into full communion with the Catholic Church.
- ▶ It is the night that we are all renewed once again to go out and live as priest, prophet, and king, to lead people to Christ, to serve God’s people and to proclaim God’s word out in the world.

Easter

- ▶ Easter is the season par excellence that continues the celebration of the Paschal Mystery, with a focus on the resurrection, ascension, and sending of Christ's Spirit to the world.
- ▶ The date of Easter varies from year to year, according to a lunar-based dating system.
- ▶ It takes seven weeks to tell the whole story.
- ▶ Easter season ends on the feast of Pentecost, 50 days from the resurrection event.
- ▶ In those seven weeks, we hear the story of doubting Thomas who did not believe Christ was resurrected; we hear Jesus tell us that he is the Good Shepherd and that goes after his sheep; we hear the story of how Jesus ascended and returned to his Father and is now sitting with him at his Father's right hand; and we hear how Jesus told the apostles to go out and baptize all nations and how the Holy Spirit would be given to us to be with us now that Jesus is with his Father.
- ▶ It takes seven weeks to bring the story into our midst.
- ▶ The liturgical color of Easter is white or gold.

Summer and Fall Ordinary Time

- ▶ Summer and Fall Ordinary Time continues the rest of the story of Christ.
- ▶ As autumn leaves begin to fall from trees and the crisp cool air returns to remind us of frigid days to come, the liturgy begins to speak of last things, end times, and the end of Jesus' ministry.
- ▶ Various solemnities and feasts occur within the season.
- ▶ The last Sunday of the year, the 34th Sunday in Ordinary Time, is the feast of Christ the King.
- ▶ The liturgical color of Ordinary Time is green.